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Young Taft Discards Striped Pants To Make Diplomatic Mark in Ireland

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By ERNIE HILL
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DUBLIN, Eire — William Howard Taft III son of the late senator from Ohio and grandson of the former President, is making diplomatic history in Ireland as American ambassador to the Emerald Isle.

Young Taft has become a sort of a cross between the all-American boy and the young Abraham Lincoln to the people of Ireland.

Anything but a cookie-pusher or tea-hound, Taft spends a good part of his time out in the country meeting the people on their home grounds.

He leaves the embassy Chrysler, the chauffeur and his striped pants at home when he goes visiting. He folds his lank figure into a pocket-sized Fiat and chugs the country roads alone.

He is liable to show up any place, emerge from his midget scooter and introduce himself as the American ambassador.

The Irish, having a healthy disdain for stuffed shirts and pomposity, think young Bill Taft is just about the greatest thing that ever came out of Washington.

He speaks English or Erse, the language of Ireland, which is more than a lot of the city Irish can do.

WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT III
... meets the people

An expert on Ireland, young Taft is more interested in the country's farm problems than he is in high-level politics. After all, Ireland is largely an agricultural country and the loss of population from the farms is hurting production and proving a national problem.

We have discovered that there is about $18,000,000 left over from ECA, Taft told me. We are planning to earmark about $6,000,000 of this to establish an agricultural institute. The Irish would provide the staff and maintain it once we get it started.

The country badly needs such an institute where graduate study can be carried out. Improved farm methods will benefit the country. Testing of cattle for tuberculosis is needed because Ireland exports beef and bullocks to England.

Taft is now averaging two speeches weekly to various groups in all parts of Ireland. He rarely turns down an invitation to address a group no matter how small or how far away.

The 38-year-old Taft was an English instructor at Yale University from 1945 to 1948 and considers himself more of a scholar than a diplomat or politician.

He was born in Bar Harbor, Me., and attended public school in Cincinnati and the Taft School in Watertown, Conn. He was graduated with a BA degree from Yale in 1937 and then worked out a doctor of philosophy degree at Princeton.

He was instructor in English at the University of Maryland and Haverford College until the war came along and he was assigned to Army intelligence. He went back to teaching at Yale after the war but in 1948 became special assistant to the ECA mission in Ireland. He was with the Central Intelligence Agency in 1951 when President Eisenhower was elected.

At Yale Taft became a serious student of Ireland. He did research work in the old and middle Irish languages.

He is married to the former Barbara Bradfield of Grand Rapids, Mich., and they have four children.

An Irish newspaper editor told me that his countrymen considered young Taft the finest representative and friend of Ireland the United States has ever sent to Dublin.

We feel, he said, that this is more than just another job for him. He is in Ireland because it is his great interest.

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